CHAPTER XVIII

THE BEEAKINQ UP OF THE UNITY OF LANGUAGE

(1) CHANGES OF LANGUAGE IN THE HISTORY OF THE JEWS

THE Jews, in the course of their history, have several times changed their language. At the time of the downfall of the Jewish State Hebrew was already used as a written language only. For daily intercourse the Jews had adopted Aramaic in Palestine and Western Asia, Greek in Egypt, and Latin in the European countries. Aramaic and Greek were retained by the Jews right up to the time of the victorious advance of Islam in the seventh and eighth centuries, when they were gradually replaced by Arabic. In the tenth century Arabic was the language of the Jews in Asia, Africa, and Spain. The greatest Jewish scholar of the period, Maimonides, wrote chiefly in Arabic. In other European countries the Jews adopted the Romanic tongues which had evolved from Latin in Gaul, Italy, and Castile. In the Byzantine Empire alone Greek was retained by them till the fifteenth century, when, under the influence of the Jewish immigrants from Spain, it was replaced by Spanish.

When in the tenth century the Jews

penetrated into
Southern and Central Germany, they
adopted German,
Awhile those coming from Byzantium into
Eastern Europe
(Kiev) adopted the Slav tongues. But whereas
the language
of their daily intercourse underwent
repeated changes,
Hebrew remained their written language. It
was used in
religious services and writings, but in Europe
also the con-
temporary Jewish literature and all
important documents
were almost invariably written in Hebrew
and, in the